House of Representatives

HON. JARED POLIS
OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, September 17, 2014

IN RECOGNITION OF NAROPA UNIVERSITY’S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to recognize and honor Boulder, Colorado’s own Naropa University, in celebration of its 40th anniversary. Naropa University is this nation’s leader in contemplative education and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

40 years ago, a Tibetan-born Buddhist leader named Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who as a young man led hundreds of Tibetans on foot from a besieged homeland, assembled a collection of students and guest faculty for the first summer session in Boulder at what is now called Naropa University. Trungpa’s vision was to create a university that would combine contemplative studies with traditional Western scholastic and artistic disciplines.

The first classes at Naropa University (then called the Naropa Institute) were held in a summer session in a vacated bus garage, now the site of the Alfalfa’s supermarket. The organizers expected around three hundred people to show up. Instead, more than 1,300 students flocked to Boulder, and in the process, transformed Boulder into an energetic center of learning, culture, and the performing arts.

As the leader in contemplative education, an approach to learning and teaching that integrates Eastern wisdom studies with traditional Western scholarship, Naropa has always been a magnet for great minds, intellectual curiosity, and those who search for greater meaning. Indeed, Naropa is renowned for its ability to attract spiritual leaders, such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, political and business leaders, and global thought leaders. And through Naropa’s vaunted Summer Writing Program, generations of writers, performers, and activists have come of age and worked side-by-side with some of our nation’s greatest poets, authors, and performers.

Naropa is now firmly embedded in the cultural, academic, and economic fabric of Boulder. Each year, 1000 undergraduate and graduate students seek degrees that will enable them to transform the world around them. Programs in counseling psychology, performing arts, art therapy, writing and poetics, early childhood and K-12 education, environmental leadership, peace studies, religious studies and pastoral counseling and traditional eastern arts are training a new generation of leaders. Thousands of Naropa alumni are changing the world for the better through work in nonprofits, small business and social enterprise start-ups, therapy, counseling, teaching and writing. They studied with a distinguished faculty who are nationally and internationally recognized for their scholarship and contemplative teaching techniques. And finally, Naropa was recently named both a “College of Distinction” and one of the “8 Greener Colleges” in the United States.

Naropa University is truly a Colorado treasure. I’m so proud to join my fellow Boulderites, as well as the thousands of Naropa alumni around the world, in congratulating Naropa University on its 40th Anniversary.